

Adapting Assessments for Online Environments

Assessment refers to various methods utilized to gauge and track student learning. Depending on multiple factors such as learning objectives, student learning needs, and learning environments, assessment may be adapted for specific learning scenarios. Adaptation of assessments is especially vital for online environments, as delivery of content, student engagement and motivation, and other activities and factors, may be significantly different from face-to-face learning environments. Adopting Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles as a framework in adapting assessments for online environments promotes the utilization of multiple means to engage students and assess the content's learning objectives.

1. What are my experiences adapting assessments for online environments?
2. What elements of assessment should I consider when adapting assessments for online environments?
3. How can I adapt online assessments to meet the needs of all students?



to Consider

Assessment refers to methods and processes used to measure and monitor learning and growth. Assessments can be formative or summative. Formative assessments are ongoing and often use informal means to monitor students' progress. Summative assessments are carried out after a lesson, unit, or course, to evaluate students' learning against an established metric or standard. Conducting a classroom poll might be considered a formative assessment, whereas mid-term and unit tests are examples of summative assessments. The purposes of assessments often drive the modes and methods of assessments.

Assessment choice is impacted by learning goals and engagement. Learning goals are aims for a lesson, unit, or course, and are measurable, observable, and attainable. They influence methods, items, and media through which assessments are designed and delivered. Engagement refers to the activeness of students towards completing a task and impacts students' performance on assessments. Teachers should vary instructional delivery and engagement by focusing on students' interests, strengths, and values to encourage student effort and persistence. When designing assessments, teachers should address equity barriers and bias, as failing to do so will decrease student engagement.

A challenge teachers face in designing assessments for online environments is assessment delivery mode. While learning and assessment goals often remain the same in both face-to-face or online environments, students in online environments may be less engaged because they are often distracted by other activities in their surroundings. Teachers must adapt assessments for online environments, focusing on engaging students to help them achieve their learning goals. Teachers can use the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles of representation, action and expression, and engagement to adapt assessments to online environments. Representation suggests that teachers should present content through multiple means, including assessments for online environments. Varying assessments also supports engagement, which motivates students and sustains their interests. The UDL principle of action and expression suggests that teachers provide students with many options to show what they know. In online environments, students can be instructed to demonstrate their knowledge through a variety of formats, and teachers can embed supports within assessments to guide students to demonstrate what they know.

Providing assessment in online environments can be challenging. By varying the methods of designing and presenting assessments and providing students with multiple options for demonstrating their knowledge, the assessment experience for students can be positive and effective. Students will be engaged, motivated to achieve their goals, and equipped to transfer learned skills to future learning and life scenarios.

KEY Elements